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Ephphatha
Sunday School



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Lizzie James.



"So she called her back, and severely reprimanded her."

p. 27.

LIZZIE EAMES:

A True Story for Talebearers.

"The words of a talebearer are as wounds."

Prov. xviii. 8; xxvi. 22


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LIZZIE EAMES.



CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOL.

It was Saturday forenoon—and a few school-girls who were standing together at an open window, were

chatting away during the moments of a short recess.

“I wonder,” said Lizzie Eames, “who will get the medals to-day?”

“I guess Lucretia will get the Reward of Merit,” replied Susanna Hale, “for I heard Miss Adams praising her yesterday, and she said she had not missed a lesson this week.”

“Well, I am glad of that, I am sure,” exclaimed Lizzie. “I hope she will get it, for she scarcely ever does, and I know she tries as hard as any of us.”

“I don’t try very hard to get the medals,” said Susanna, “for I don’t care any thing about them. They do well enough for little children.

I always do as well as I can, and then I have the reward of a good conscience; and, as mother says, that's better than all the medals in the world."

"To be sure,"—chimed in the voice of Martha Little, or *little Martha*, as the girls called her, for her size corresponded to her name—"to be sure—but there is a sort of satisfaction in getting the medals after all; because then you have something to show at home that you have been good, and perhaps they wouldn't believe it, if it were not for that."

"Yes, indeed," added Lizzie, "there is a real pleasure in that. I know aunt Mary is always so much pleased, when she sees me with a

medal. She says she is very glad to see that I have been good all the week, for nothing makes her so happy as to see me trying to do well. Now, I like the reward of a good conscience as well as Susanna does, but if I had nothing else, aunt Mary would lose all this pleasure, and that is worth as much as the other to me."

"So I think"—"And I"—"And I,"—exclaimed several voices at once, as they grew warm under the influence of Lizzie's animated tones.

But just then the bell rang, and the sound of their happy voices was hushed, as they quietly turned to their desks and their studies. Yet there was one whose heart was

busy in thought and feeling, and beating high with expectation, as the remaining hour of school passed slowly away. It was our little friend Lizzie.

It was the custom in that school, (as in many others at that time—for we are speaking of the scenes of many years ago,) to distribute gold and silver medals, as rewards, among the children. They were not given, but only loaned to the scholars, to be worn for a certain length of time, as a testimonial of the approbation of the teacher, and were hung about the neck with a tasteful ribbon. Some were given out daily, at the close of the school, and others were reserved for Saturday noon, -the close of the week. Of these,

two were especially appropriated to the older class. One was entitled the "Reward of Merit," and was bestowed upon the scholar who had best acquitted herself in the recitations and duties of the week. The other was inscribed with the words, "The Amiable Scholar," and its title indicated its design. For Miss Adams found (as all parents and teachers do) so much selfishness and disagreement among the children, that she had sought to excite their ambition in this matter, as in their studies, by the promise of reward.

The wearer of the medal was always greatly delighted with the distinction. To some, its beauty as

an ornament and the bright ribbon by which it was suspended were its greatest attractions, and they were content if they could have the pleasure of wearing it, as a decoration, from Saturday noon until Monday morning. Others, of a more ambitious spirit, received it as a token of triumph over their less successful companions, and bore it away with an air of superiority, which seemed to ask for the notice and the praise of all. But there were others, whose feelings were of a purer and better nature. The approbation of their teacher, added to the smiles of conscience, gave elasticity to their footsteps, as they bounded home, bearing their reward as the testimonial of their

good behaviour, to cheer the heart of some kind mother or beloved friend. Such a one was Lizzie Eames.



CHAPTER II.

LIZZIE EAMES.

AND who was Lizzie? She was a fatherless child, in the home and under the care of her aunt Mary. There was nothing very uncommon about her. Indeed, she was so much like other children, that many a one among my little readers would find in her a picture of themselves. No matter whether she was rich or poor; for riches make no one good, and poverty makes no one bad. No matter

whether she was beautiful or not, for beauty soon passes away, and, while it lasts, is often a snare. But Lizzie, like some other children I have known, often wished she was pretty. She used sometimes to stand before the glass and look at herself, and wish she had a high forehead, and beautiful eyes, and a fair complexion, like some of her companions. She forgot that beauty consists not alone in handsome features. Aunt Mary had often told her the grand secret of a pretty face. Would you like to know it, little reader? *Good-humour, and a cheerful, happy disposition!* The face that is generally lighted up with smiles is never homely—*never*.

Now this was Lizzie's greatest

difficulty. She was often disagreeable in her deportment. She had her cross days, and her pouting, sour looks. If things went wrong—if she felt in any way uncomfortable—if she was asked to do a thing she did not like to do—in short, if she could not have her own way, she had an unhappy expression, which would have spoiled the prettiest face in the world.

Oh, how much aunt Mary talked to her about it! And Lizzie knew that every word she said was true, and it seemed as if she did sincerely wish she could correct it. Again and again she resolved to watch herself closely, and, if disappointed, or in any difficulty, to look pleasant and cheerful about it. But it is

very hard to break up a bad habit, and she was often almost discouraged.

Yet aunt Mary was not. She knew how long and patiently one must labour to overcome a selfish and unamiable temper, and she was kind and tender with her little girl, and did all she could to encourage and help her. She knew that Lizzie had a nervous, sensitive nature; and a great many things, which other children would never have minded, made her very uncomfortable. She had a strong will too, which, while it helped her to do right when she had a rightly-disposed mind, made it much more trying for her to submit to disappointments and contradictions.

But there was one good thing about Lizzie Eames. She had a quick conscience; and that was a faithful friend to her. As often as temptations came, it reiterated the words of aunt Mary, and the precepts of her Bible, with which her memory was well stored, and urged and urged the right so strongly, that she could not well get off. She would struggle for a moment, and then the sunshine of a smile would break through the clouds on her face and light up her tearful eyes, till one might almost have seen a rainbow there. Then the child felt happy.

Those were her sweetest moments. Her heart was full of peace and calm joy, and she felt that it was

true, as she had learned it from God's holy word, that "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace." And this sweet reward inspired her with resolution and strength for new efforts.

Now it was because this was Lizzie's besetting sin, and because she had, on this point, received so many counsels, and endured so many conflicts, and tasted such pleasant rewards, that the medal for "The Amiable Scholar" possessed a great attraction in her eyes. Oh, if she only could get that, only wear it home once, to show that she had improved! This was her highest ambition.

She had never any trouble about her lessons; she loved to study,

and learned all her tasks easily and quickly; she knew aunt Mary had no anxiety about that. Her disposition was the chief cause of solicitude, and when she showed any signs of improvement, the pleasant smile and kind words which greeted her, well repaid her for trying. So she determined, if possible, to gain this prize.

Week after week she thought about it, and really tried very hard to obtain it. Many a time she brushed away a tear and put on a pleasant look, when she was tempted to be unhappy and sullen. When pushed away from the stove, on a cold morning, by some thoughtless companion, too eager to warm her own aching fingers, she cheerfully found

a place in some less crowded corner
When a word in her spelling-lesson
was missed, (a great mortification,
because it was so rare,) and the
scholar next her in the class
claimed her place, she went down
with a prompt step and without
a frown. These things could not
escape the teacher's eye, and at
the close of a week, more than
usually full of such trials and con-
quests, she hung the longed-for
medal, for the first time, on Lizzie's
neck.

Never was her heart so light or
her step as elastic as then. She
bounded eagerly home, and when
she had put her bonnet and cloak
in the accustomed place, she pre-
sented herself before aunt Mary,

and, without speaking a word, held out the medal before her.

“Oh, I am glad to see that!” was the hearty exclamation, as aunt Mary imprinted a warm kiss on the glowing cheek of the little girl, and for once Lizzie was completely satisfied.

Then she determined to have it again. Several times she thought it would be her's—and then, in an evil hour, she would forget herself, and, yielding to her unhappy temper, would undo the work of days.

Months had now gone by, and on this Saturday, Lizzie was hoping and confidently expecting to bear home that medal. She was going that afternoon to visit her mother

and sisters, and she wanted to show it to them as the fruit of her efforts.

With what a trembling eagerness did she long for the remaining hour of school to pass away. Poor child! we know not what an hour may bring forth.



CHAPTER III.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE bell rang; the books were put away, and the classes arranged in order before the desk of the teacher. One might have read in Lizzie's whole appearance that some eager thought was in her heart. Her quick motions, her sparkling eyes, her indifference to all that was passing around her, and her earnest gaze into the face of the teacher, as she pronounced the name of the successful candi-

date, all betrayed the deep excitement that she felt. "The Reward of Merit" was bestowed, as Susanna had predicted, on Lucretia, and a faint smile passed over Lizzie's face, in token of her sympathy, as with all absorbing interest, she turned again to hear the next name. *It was not her's.* She thought she could not have heard aright. She looked again, but the medal was gone—borne away by another. The truth fell upon her like a thunder-clap. So confident had been her expectation, so intense the excitement of her feelings, and so complete her disappointment, that she was almost stunned; she heard and saw nothing. She neither moved nor spoke.

“What makes you stand there, looking so?” said Martha.

The sound and the question aroused Lizzie, and she started to put on her bonnet.

“Why, how sober you look; what are you thinking about?” continued Martha.

“Oh, nothing, nothing at all,” said Lizzie.

She could not have revealed to any one all that was passing within. If she had tried, the words she would have uttered would not have half expressed the emotions that were gushing up in her heart. But she was ashamed to show how much she had been disappointed about what some of the girls thought a very little thing; so she

tried to conceal it by an assumed gayety. She talked and laughed and danced about, until, in her attempts to appear happy, she became almost boisterous.

Saturday noon was always a gladsome time for the children. The week's duties were over, and playtime had come, and many were the plans that had been formed for "good times" that afternoon. All were bright and antic as fairy elves on a gay summer morning. The bonnets were tied, the books for Monday's lessons were collected, and then the little girls vied with each other in the swiftness with which they should run down stairs. They did not intend to make any disturbance. Oh no—but children

are not always aware how much noise they do make in their frolic and play. It must have been so with these little girls, for, in the midst of their shouts and merriment, the voice of Miss Adams was heard, in tones of displeasure, at the top of the staircase.

“What do you mean, children, by making such a noise?” she exclaimed. “I should think you were rude boys running through the house. Lizzie Eames, come back here.”

She happened to be standing on the last stair, and Miss Adams, as she looked over the railing above, seeing her there, supposed, in her haste, and without taking a moment for consideration, that she was principally to blame. So she

called her back and severely reprimanded her. Lizzie looked up in her teacher's face and timidly replied—

“I did not make the noise, Miss Adams.”

She did not mean to—and she thought she did not—and in reality she was no more to blame than the others. But the teacher was angry, and made no allowance. Lizzie's attempt to excuse herself, therefore, only procured for her a more severe rebuke.

“Oh dear!” said she to herself, as she slowly and quietly descended the stairs again, “everything goes wrong with me: when I don't mean to do any thing bad, I always get the worst scolding;” and her full heart found vent in tears.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TELL-TALE.

MORTIFIED and grieved beyond measure, Lizzie joined her companions on the pavement.

“Oh, don’t cry so,” said one.

“What did she say to you?” asked another—as the little group gathered about her.

“Oh, it’s too bad, I declare it’s too bad,” cried the unhappy child. “She said I made all the noise, and I’m sure I did not.”

“No indeed, we all did our part,”

said Martha. "I know I made as much as anybody."

"And I, too," said Lucretia.

"And I know," said Caroline, "you couldn't make so much as I did—for only look at my shoes! They were new yesterday, and just see how much thicker the soles are than her's."

"It's too bad," they all agreed.

"She might have scolded at us all," said Martha, "and that would have been fair. But to give it all to you, it was not right, I am sure."

"No," said Lizzie, "and she said she heard me above all the rest. Those were her very words. *And it's a lie.*"

"O Lizzie!" exclaimed Susanna,

“it’s very wicked for you to say so—to accuse Miss Adams of telling a lie.”

“Why, it surely was,” persisted Lizzie, “for she said I made all the noise, and you know yourself I didn’t, for we were all running together.”

“Well, mother says it is wrong to accuse persons of lying,” replied Susanna; “we should say they make a mistake.”

“I shouldn’t think it was wrong,” said Martha. “The Bible talks about lies, and I don’t see why it should be wicked for us.”

“Well, aunt Mary is as particular as anybody,” said Lizzie, “and she says we must always call things by their right names. I heard her

telling a lady so the other day. And why is it any worse to say a person lies, than to say he steals?"

"Oh, I think it is," replied Susanna; "and then to say it of your teacher, too! It's dreadful! And I think she ought to know it, for mother says when a child does wrong, her teacher or her parents ought to know it. So I think I shall go and tell Miss Adams of it. Come, Martha, you go with me!"

"Me? No indeed, you won't catch me turning tell-tale! I'd be ashamed of such a thing," answered the generous Martha.

"I don't see what you want to go and tell her for," said Lucretia; "it won't do any good."

"And I am sure she has scolded

Lizzie enough already," interposed Maria. "It will only make her more angry, and perhaps she will punish her. I wouldn't go."

"I think it is as bad to tell tales, as to say a person lies," said little Caroline, whose thoughts were as quick as her footsteps.

"Mother says a tell-tale is the meanest creature living," said Martha. "She never will let me tell her the least thing about the children at home."

"Well, my mother says, when a child does wrong it ought to be known, so that it can be corrected," said Susanna; "and so I think Miss Adams ought to know this." And she immediately retraced her steps to the school-room. Lizzie stood mute:

it seemed to her as if the very sky would fall and crush her. The fault, thus magnified into a crime, was at the worst an inadvertency; and the act of Susanna, though she thought it right, was both unwise and ungenerous.

She could not imagine the result of the communication, but her countenance betrayed her fears. Her cheek still glowing with the excitement of the forenoon, and the effort required to conceal her disappointment—her eye suffused with tears for what she thought the undeserved reprimand she had just received—the increased agitation of her feelings from talking over the matter—and now the consequences of that one unguarded expression, produced a feverish and

distressed look, which any one who saw must have pitied. Carrie nestled close up to her side, and with an affectionate hug around the waist, whispered—

“Don’t you cry, Lizzie dear. I won’t love Susanna any more. I will never love her again.”

The other girls all joined in commiseration for her troubles, and in loud reproaches and upbraidings of Susanna. But their sympathy could not relieve her, and she walked sadly on, without speaking a word, wondering what would come next.

Poor Lizzie! it was an hour of darkness and suffering indeed for her.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUFFERER.

A STEP was soon heard behind them, as the little party walked slowly along. It was Susanna.

"Miss Adams wants you to come back with me, Lizzie."

Lizzie turned.

"I wouldn't go—I declare I wouldn't," said one.

"It's too bad in you, Susanna," said another.

"What is she going to do?" inquired a third.

“I don’t know,” answered Susanna; “only she told me to tell her to come right back with me.”

“Are you going, Lizzie?” asked Martha.

“Why, yes, of course. How can I help it?” said she sorrowfully.

“Well, then, I mean to go too. I’ll stand by you,” said the kind-hearted girl.

Sympathy was in every heart, and impressed on every face, while the cries of “It’s a shame!” “It’s too bad!” followed the girls, as they proceeded to the school-room. They soon reached it and stood before the teacher’s desk.

“Did you say that I told a lie?” asked Miss Adams of the trembling child.

“Yes ma’am, but I didn’t mean any thing by it. I said you thought I made all the noise running down stairs, and I was sure I didn’t.”

“You may take your books and go home. You can never come to my school again. And, Susanna, you may take this note to her aunt Mary.”

Susanna took the note and left the room. It contained a hasty and exaggerated description of the offence, and a statement of the punishment so inconsiderately inflicted—and was calculated to convey to her aunt Mary the impression that the child had been guilty of a wilful and unpardonable fault, rather than of a momentary folly.

And Susanna—could she feel

happy? She who had, of her own accord, carried the information to her teacher, was now employed by her to bear the same to aunt Mary, and to over-cloud that quiet household with sorrow and shame. Did she think her errand was one of love and duty?

Perhaps she did, for we are sometimes led on, by mistaken views of duty, to do those things which we afterward regret. But we cannot help thinking that she must at some time have been sorry for the part she acted in this unhappy transaction—and whenever she met Lizzie, if she had any idea, from her dejected face, of the spirit so crushed and bleeding within, a feeling of self-reproach must have been awakened—for she

was many years older than her little companion, and capable of reflection and of feeling.

But to return to Lizzie:—Almost fainting under the intensity of her feelings, she emptied her desk, and taking her books and slate, as well as she could, on her arm, went down stairs. Her limbs trembled, her knees smote one against the other, and she was so dizzy she could scarcely walk; and when she came down into the street, how changed every thing seemed!

The sun was no longer bright, and the grass and flowers had lost their beauty and their fragrance. The very air appeared so oppressive she could hardly breathe. She could not

cry, for her suffering was too deep for tears.

As she walked along, the scenes of the last hour came over her like the memory of a dreadful dream. She opened her eyes, turned her head, and wondered if she were really awake. Then the sad, grieved image of aunt Mary rose before her, and her heart sickened more and more. What should she do when she went home? How could she meet aunt Mary? Oh, if she could only get away somewhere, that nobody might ever see her again! What would her mother say, and all her friends? What would be done with her? Where should she go to school? What should she say, if any one asked why she left Miss Adams'?

To be turned out of school! Was there ever such a disgrace?

All these thoughts flitted hurriedly through her mind, until she was lost in the bewilderment of sorrow. She hardly knew it, when she reached her own gate. She went in, laid down her books, hung her bonnet in its accustomed place, and went to her own room. She saw no one, and all about the house was still. It seemed as if every thing was shrouded in the gloom of her own feelings. She was called to dinner. She had no appetite, and would gladly have been excused; but she knew she must go, and she went. Aunt Mary was there, and all the other members of the family but they said nothing to her. She

tried to eat a little, and then rose and left the table. All the afternoon she wandered about the garden and the house, carrying this heavy weight upon her heart. No place gave her ease, no object diverted her, no employment suited her. She was utterly miserable.

Oh, if aunt Mary had only spoken to her, how gladly would she have laid her head upon her bosom, and told her all the story, and wept away her grief. But she was silent, and that was harder to bear than all the rest.

Had aunt Mary no sympathy for her? Oh yes, she felt deeply for her sorrow and her shame, but the matter had been so represented to her that she supposed Lizzie fully deserved the severe punish-

ment imposed upon her; and, for the child's good, she would not allow her tenderness to interfere with the discipline.

The next day was the Sabbath, and it was a day of special interest to the children, for it was the anniversary of their Sunday-school. Lizzie had anticipated the day with peculiar pleasure, but now a cloud overhung every thing. Oh, she thought, I shall never, never be happy again. I wish I could die. No, I don't, either. I wish I had never been born. But that's of no use. Oh dear, what shall I do? The girls will all point at me, and nobody will ever want to speak with me again.

Poor child, she did suffer! Who

can tell the amount of anguish endured by that sensitive child, in those first few days of mingled disgrace and shame and sorrow. Though she had committed no crime, yet she was made to feel that she had, by the severity of the punishment that was inflicted upon her. And no punishment could have been selected to have caused her greater shame. She had lost her self-respect—and she felt that every one despised her. How could she ever look up again into the faces of her friends? She must evermore walk with an abashed and downcast eye. No one spoke kindly to her about it, no one showed her the least sympathy or love.

And the punishment was not a temporary one. It lasted for months and years. Yes, Lizzie grew up to be a woman before she entirely lost that sense of mortification and disgrace. Whenever she chanced to meet her former teachers, she tried to avoid them. Whenever, in the social circle, she met her old companions, and, in pleasant conversation, they reverted to the scenes of childhood, she always trembled, lest Miss Adams' school should be mentioned. And never, to her dying day, will be erased from her memory the scenes and the sufferings of that period of her life.

CHAPTER VI.

WHO'LL BE A TELL-TALE.

“SHE suffered too much—I am sure she did—much more than was needful,” methinks I hear some little reader exclaim.

So she did; and can you tell me what caused all that trouble and distress?

“Why, Susanna’s telling tales,” you say. You are right; her first troubles, her disappointment, and “the scolding,” as she called it, which she received, would soon have

been forgotten. The intended pleasure of the afternoon, and of the next day, would have swept all the vexation and sorrow from her heart, and Monday morning would have found her at school again, as blithe and busy as ever, and as earnestly striving for that much desired medal. But Susanna bore an evil report of her to the teacher, which, through her haste and passion, procured her all this suffering. For the teacher herself afterward acknowledged that she had punished her too hastily, and begged that Lizzie might return to her school again.

But how do you suppose Susanna felt? Do you think she ever looked back upon that act with pleasure?

Or, could she ever meet Lizzie again without feeling that she had wronged her? Or, could she help knowing that she was branded among her schoolmates as a tell-tale? Oh, I would rather have suffered all Lizzie did, than to be obliged to reproach myself with such an ungenerous act as Susanna's.

Did any one ever tell tales of you? What kind of feelings did it awaken? As you saw them going toward your parent or teacher, to tell them, unnecessarily, of some fault you had committed, were you not greatly mortified? And were you not moreover pained and grieved? And did you not think in your heart that it was very unkind and

ungenerous in them to do so? Were those pleasant feelings? No indeed, you say.

And did you ever yourself tell tales of any one? Of a brother or sister or companion? And is it generous and kind in you to cause those feelings in another, which you yourself know to be so unpleasant? Is that doing as you would be done by? And do you like to have others think so meanly of you? Would you wish to have your playmates, or your brothers and sisters turn from you with aversion, or point the finger at you because you are a tell-tale? Then remember the law of love and kindness, and never cause others to suffer, if you can help it. If you see them doing wrong, speak to them

kindly of it, and try to persuade them to do better. If you see a child brought into immediate danger by a wrong act, then it may be proper and necessary to speak of it, to procure assistance. But even then, it may be done with so much delicacy and kindness as not to expose them to needless suffering.

But usually this will not be the case, and the kind word which you may speak will correct the wrong more surely than if you carry it to another. For in this case, the offender will be humbled, not mortified; subdued and not irritated. Our Saviour points out our duty in this respect very clearly. He says, "If thy brother trespass against thee, tell him his fault, *between him*

and thee alone." If he will not hear and heed us, we must speak to him before our companions, obtaining thus their influence and counsel. If he will not hear them, then, as a last resort, we must carry it to those who can exercise authority.

My young readers, let me entreat you, if you have, or wish to have any nobleness of character, never do so mean an act as to *tell tales* !

